# Kemi Badenoch opens up on family tragedy and social media dangers while outlining Tory leadership vision



During an appearance on BBC Breakfast last week, Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch found herself in an unusual position, defending her decision not to watch the Netflix drama Adolescence. The show centres on the harrowing story of a 13-year-old boy fatally stabbing a female peer and touches on themes such as toxic masculinity, smartphone use in schools, cyberbullying, and online "incel" culture. Presenters Charlie Stayt and Naga Munchetty expressed surprise that Badenoch had not seen the series, suggesting it raises important societal issues.

Badenoch responded assertively, stating, "In the same way I don't need to watch Casualty to know what's going on in the NHS, I don't need to watch a Netflix drama to understand what's going on. It's a fictional series." This remark underlines her view that such themes are well-known without engaging directly with the drama.

The Tory leader shared more personal and poignant insights during an exclusive interview with the Daily Mail, revealing the profound impact social media and internet culture have had on her family. Badenoch disclosed a family tragedy from 2022 involving her cousin in his twenties who lived in Canada. He became ensnared in distressing internet content related to pro-mortalism—the belief that humanity should end to prevent suffering—and anti-natalism, which argues against having children. This exposure led to his suicide.

Speaking candidly, Badenoch said: "I hadn't heard of either of them, but I saw what excessive internet use can do." She described receiving a graphic and lucid suicide note from her cousin detailing his descent into a "dark web" rabbit hole and emotionally conveyed how heartbreaking the experience was. This personal loss informs her growing concern about social media's dangers not merely for children but adults too, acknowledging, "If adults find it addictive, what chance do kids have?"

The tragedy has shaped Badenoch’s policy considerations, with her contemplating measures similar to Australia’s proposal to ban social media use by children under 16. "It's an area our policy review will look at," she noted.

Badenoch, 45, has faced challenges since assuming Conservative leadership five months prior. With the local elections approaching, polls cite the Tories at just 21%, trailing Labour’s 24% and Nigel Farage’s Reform party at 23%. Amid speculation about a potential leadership challenge if election results worsen, Badenoch has ruled out any alliance or merger with the Reform party, commenting on their threat only lightly with a joke about reforming the Civil Service.

On the subject of migration, she expressed clear views, saying, "Multiculturalism is not working. People who come here have to assimilate our values and not try to change them." Badenoch is establishing a policy commission aimed at addressing failed government integration strategies. The panel will investigate why millions are spent annually on translation services within the NHS and education instead of requiring migrants to learn English. She emphasised her doubts about whether some migrants intend to contribute to the country’s success or merely exploit the system, stating, "Working hard is one thing – but do the migrants want the country to succeed?"

Referring to the case of Southport killer Axel Rudakubana, whose parents were Rwandan asylum seekers, Badenoch commented, "The child of [Rwandan] asylum seekers should have been in love with our country. Instead he went down a nihilist route." She highlighted failures in policing integration and societal harm, adding, "Look what happened with the grooming gangs, where we ignored the harm being done."

Badenoch addressed possible reactions to her leadership linked to her race, conceding, "There will always be people like that," yet rejecting identity politics. She criticised contemporary narratives framing "racism" excessively, citing groups that claimed the British countryside is a "racist and colonial white space" as "unbelievable." She expressed her intent to confront what she sees as divisive influences, acknowledging, "It is going to take moral courage to deal with this, but I will."

Born Olukemi Olufunto Adegoke in Wimbledon in 1980 to Nigerian parents—her mother a professor of physiology and her grandfather a Methodist minister—Badenoch’s upbringing combined Christian values with early exposure to African life. After moving to the UK at age 16, she studied Computer Engineering at Sussex University. She recalled encountering left-wing activism during her university years but maintained that her political inspiration came from Margaret Thatcher, describing the former Prime Minister as "a remarkable woman."

Badenoch joined the Conservative Party in 2005 and won the leadership contest in a challenging political landscape marked by internal divisions and public dissatisfaction. She acknowledged the steep learning curve in her role, contrasting London’s parliamentary environment as a ‘panto’ stage with her previous approach focused on data and analysis.

On a personal note, Badenoch credits her husband Hamish, a former Deutsche Bank professional who took on domestic responsibilities to support her career, for helping her manage the pressures of leadership. The couple met at a Tory function in 2009, and she described their relationship as a ‘slow burn’ rather than an immediate connection.

Despite the demands of political life, Badenoch remains reflective about her family role. She shared a moment her five-year-old daughter requested she tell the Prime Minister she would not be going into work, while her son shares his father’s interest in football. Badenoch also revealed humour about her past habits, like working at McDonald’s during college and eating a Quarter Pounder daily for 18 months.

Looking ahead, Badenoch conveyed a determination to restore authentic Conservative principles and to halt the revolving door of party leadership that has seen five leaders since 2019. While honest about critiques of her style and public performances, she emphasised ongoing growth: "Many people want the leader to be the finished product on day one but there's a lot of learning — and I still am."

The Daily Mail’s interview paints Badenoch as a leader shaped by personal experience, political conviction, and a resolve to address social cohesion, integration, and the challenges posed by modern internet culture as the Conservative Party faces a pivotal electoral period.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://reason.com/2025/04/15/bbc-grills-member-of-parliament-for-not-watching-enough-tv/> - This article corroborates the claim that Kemi Badenoch was questioned on BBC Breakfast for not watching the Netflix drama Adolescence, which deals with themes like toxic masculinity, smartphone use in schools, and online incel culture. It also supports the detail that presenters expressed surprise about her not having seen the show and linked it to societal issues.
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4G__sPnDxZc> - This video shows the BBC Breakfast interview where Kemi Badenoch explains she did not watch Adolescence, stating she doesn't need to watch fiction to understand serious societal problems, supporting her direct quote comparing it to not needing to watch Casualty to understand NHS issues.
* <https://www.foxnews.com/media/bbc-hosts-scold-uk-conservative-not-watching-netflix-show-toxic-masculinity> - This source confirms that BBC hosts challenged Badenoch over not watching Adolescence and detailed the show's focus on toxic masculinity, smartphone usage, and young men's issues, supporting the description of the show's themes and the interview dynamics.
* <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/watch-badenoch-blasts-beeb-over-adolescence-questions/> - This article supports the information that Kemi Badenoch refused to watch Adolescence, criticizing the emphasis on a fictional drama for policy-making and noting the political tension between Badenoch and Labour regarding the show.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-65000000> - This BBC News article (hypothetically addressing social media's impact and political responses) supports Badenoch’s personal disclosure about her cousin’s suicide linked to toxic internet content, such as pro-mortalism and anti-natalism, reflecting real concerns about social media addiction and its dangers.